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EXAMINATION OF SILENT SHORT ANIMATION FILM

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Abstract

Cinema is attracting people from all over the world since 19th centuries as both an artistic way of thinking and producing and as an entertainment tool. Watching moveable images, especially during the beginning periods of cinema as silent, surprised spectator and spectator believed the images as they are the parts of real life. Today, cinema is improved with technological advances and transformed with today's conditions and magical screen of cinema is continuing to effect people.

Silent, as an animation short film, has the story of beginning times of cinema by underlining its power. In Silent, two street performers or dancers found a magical box that tells the story of improvement of cinema to spectator. Moonbot Studios and Dolby's partnership developed the film and in 2014, Silent won Epica 2014 Animation Award on Advertisement as it is one of the most prestigious awards on advertisement in Europe.

In this paper, Silent is analyzed due to its technical properties, technical staff and art directors. Moreover, general information is given about widely used animation techniques. As a researching method, descriptive survey and literature survey made and interviews with art directors and technical crew of the film were evaluated.

Key words: Cinema, animation, art, filmic analysis.

Öz

Sinema ilk örneklerinin çekildiği 19.yy'dan bugüne insanların ilgisine çekmekte, hem sanatsal bir ifade aracı hem de eğlence unsuru olabilmektedir. Hareket eden görüntüleri izlemek, özellikle ilk dönem sinema örneklerinde olduğu gibi sessiz olarak, izleyicileri şaşırtmış ve bir kısım izleyici ekranda gördüklerinin gerçek olduğu yanılgısına kapılmışlardır. Günümüzde ise sinema teknolojisi büyük aşamalardan geçmiş ve sinemanın büyülü ekranı insanları kendisine çekmeye devam etmiştir.

Silent/Sessiz kısa animasyon filmi, sinemanın tarihsel gelişimine dair bir öyküyü anlatmakta ve sinemanın etki gücünü vurgulamaktadır. Silent/Sessiz, iki sokak performansının eski, harabe bir



evde keşfettikleri esrarengiz kutu üzerinden sinemanın geçmişi ve bugünü arasındaki bağlantıyı izleyiciye aktarmaktadır. Moonbot Stüdyoları ve Dolby ortak yapımı olan kısa film, 2014 yılında Avrupa'nın en saygın reklamcılık ödülllerinden biri olan Epica 2014 Animasyon Dalı Reklamcılık Ödülü'nü kazanmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, Silent/Sessiz kısa animasyonu, teknik özellikleri, teknik ekibi ve sanat yönetmenleri üzerinden incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, Dünyadaki animasyon teknikleri hakkında genel bilgilendirmelere yer verilmiştir. Araştırma yöntemi olarak literatür taraması ve betimsel taramalar yapılmış, filmin sanat yönetmenleri ve teknik ekip ile yapılan röportajlar değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sinema, animasyon, sanat, filmsel çözümleme

1. INTRODUCTION

Cinema can be defined with various ways and therefore it becomes harder to define the term, cinema involving the whole meaning by reflecting its techniques, culture, artistic terminology, etc.

In different dictionaries, cinema is also named and mentioned through purpose of its useage. The Free Dictionary, defines cinema in parts. As a result, cinema can be:

- a place designed for the exhibition of film
- the art or business of making films
- the cinema, motion pictures, as an art or industry.
- a motion-picture theater¹.

In general cinema is a medium that creates moving pictures and attracts people by using cinematographic language that refers to the world of cinema.

Cinema creates an industry and it is quite surprising that this “industrial cinema” is also critized by using tools of cinema as named “ counter-cinema.” The counteriness comes from being not opposite to cinema itself, mainly the reason is being opposite to the “industry”.

Counter-cinema refers to the rough grouping of films, film makers, and institutions which attempt to set themselves against the formalist and ideological domination of

¹ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/cinema>, 18.05.2015



Hollywood cinema. The name “counter-cinema” suggests a discursive practice that actively opposes mainstream cinema and thus offers an alternative to the discourses that mainstream cinema helps construct. One could include avant-garde, *art*, and Third World cinema in this group, all of which attempt to create some level of distancing in the viewer by questioning, subverting and/or openly challenging the basic codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema. These would include cohesive and linear narrative structure, *continuity editing*, *mise-en-scene* that perpetuates “cinematic realism,” cultural stereotypes, etc. Counter-cinema is often self-reflexive, bringing attention to itself as a film and to the institution of cinema. Examples of such films include anti-bourgeois films such as Godard's *Weekend* (1968), Potter's feminist *Thriller* (1979), and Riggs' *Black/gay Tongues Untied* (1990). While these films clearly distinguish themselves as "oppositional" in both form and content, the degree of distancing effects varies greatly across films placed in these categories by film critics, and the battle over definitions gets to the heart of debates concerning the efficacy of using the institutional discourse of cinema as a means of effecting political change².

1.1 History of Cinema

The history of film began in the 1890s, with the invention of the first motion-picture cameras and the establishment of the first film production companies. The films of the 1890s were under a minute long and until 1927, motion pictures were produced without sound. The first eleven years of motion pictures show the cinema moving from a novelty to an established large-scale entertainment industry. The films became several minutes long consisting of several shots. The first rotating camera for taking panning shots was built in 1897. The first film studios were built in 1897. Special effects were introduced and film continuity, involving action moving from one sequence into another, began to be used. In 1900, continuity of action across successive shots was achieved and the close-up shot was introduced. Most films of this period were what came to be called "chase films". The first use of animation in movies was in 1899. The first feature length multi-reel film was a 1906 Australian production. The first successful permanent theatre showing only

² <https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/counter-cinema.htm>, 18.05.2015



films was "The Nickelodeon" in Pittsburgh in 1905. By about 1910, actors began to receive screen credit for their roles, and the way to the creation of film stars was opened. Regular newsreels were exhibited from 1910 and soon became a popular way for finding out the news. Overall, from about 1910, American films had the largest share of the market in all European countries except France.

New film techniques that were introduced in this period include the use of artificial lighting, fire effects and Low-key lighting (i.e. lighting in which most of the frame is dark) for enhanced atmosphere during sinister scenes. As films grew longer, specialist writers were employed to simplify more complex stories derived from novels or plays into a form that could be contained on one reel. Genres began to be used as categories; the main division was into comedy and drama, but these categories were further subdivided. The years of the First World War were a complex transitional period for the film industry. The exhibition of films changed from short one-reel programmes to feature films. Exhibition venues became larger and began charging higher prices. By 1914, continuity cinema was the established mode of commercial cinema. One of the advanced continuity techniques involved an accurate and smooth transition from one shot to another.

D. W. Griffith had the highest standing amongst American directors in the industry, because of the dramatic excitement he conveyed to the audience through his films. The American Industry, or "Hollywood", as it was becoming known after its new geographical center in California, gained the position it has held, more or less, ever since: film factory for the world and exporting its product to most countries on earth. By the 1920s, the United States reached what is still its era of greatest-ever output, producing an average of 800 feature films annually. Film History of the 1920s or 82% of the global total. During late 1927, Warners released *The Jazz Singer*, the first synchronized dialogue (and singing) in a feature film. By the end of 1929, Hollywood was almost all-talkie, with several competing sound systems. Sound saved the Hollywood studio system in the face of the Great Depression³.

Early movie cameras were fastened to the head of their tripod with only simple levelling devices provided. These cameras were thus effectively fixed during the

³ Parkinson, David. 1995. *History of Film*. New York: Thames & Hudson. ISBN 0-500-20277-X



course of the shot, and hence the first camera movements were the result of mounting a camera on a moving vehicle. The Lumière brothers shot a scene from the back of a train in 1896.

The first rotating camera for taking panning shots was built by Robert W. Paul in 1897, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. He used his camera to shoot the procession in one shot. His device had the camera mounted on a vertical axis that could be rotated by a worm gear driven by turning a crank handle, and Paul put it on general sale the next year. Shots taken using such a "panning" head were also referred to as 'panoramas' in the film catalogues of the first decade of the cinema⁴.

Georges Méliès built one of the first film studios in May 1897. It had a glass roof and three glass walls constructed after the model of large studios for still photography, and it was fitted with thin cotton cloths that could be stretched below the roof to diffuse the direct rays of the sun on sunny days. Beginning in 1887, Méliès would go on to produce, direct, and distribute over 500 short films⁵. The majority of these films were short, one-shot films completed in one take. Méliès drew many comparisons between film and the stage, which was apparent in his work. He realized that film afforded him the ability (via his use of timelapse photography) to "produce visual spectacles not achievable in the theater⁶.

The Execution of Mary Stuart, produced by the Edison Company for viewing with the Kinetoscope, showed Mary Queen of Scots being executed in full view of the camera⁷. The effect was achieved by replacing the actor with a dummy for the final shot. Georges Méliès also utilized this technique in the making of Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert-Houdin (The Vanishing Lady). The woman is seen to vanish through the use of stop motion techniques⁸.

⁴ "The Cine Camera Which Began the National Cinematography Collection". National Media Museum. <http://blog.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/2013/05/20/robert-w-paul-cinematograph-camera-30th-birthday-countdown>. 18.05.2015

⁵ Wakeman, John. 1987. World Film Directors, Volume 1. The H. W. Wilson Company. pp. 747-765.

⁶ Gazetas, Aristides. 2000. An Introduction to World Cinema. Jefferson: McFarland Company, Inc.

⁷ "The Execution of Mary Stuart, 1895." <http://www.lomography.com/magazine/101176-the-magic-of-early-cinema-the-execution-of-mary-stuart-1895>. 18.05.2015

⁸ "History of Film". http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_film#cite_note-The_House_of_Witmark-. 18.05.2015



2.1 Technical Properties of Silent Short Animation Film

Silent short animation film is produced with computer aided animation techniques. It is produced by Moonboot Studios and Dolby's staff together. The partnership of Moonboot Studios and Dolby is one of the reasons of its success. Film is awarded by Academy of Motion Picture under the category of Arts and Science's Scientific and Technical Awards in February 2015. Another reason of its success is mostly depended on the cooperation between art and science during Silent's filming process more than the compability of music and animation ⁹. Animation is an area or discipline that uses almost all other media tools (sound, music, image, Picture, scenerio, literature, theatre, etc.) and to produce succesful samples of animation, the key is to achieve multi-disciplinary working conditions. Silent is a great sample of multi-disciplinary studies in animation field.



Image 1. Character designing sketches of Silent¹⁰

To categorize Silent on the perspective of its technical features, CG (Computer Graphics) has the basic role on obtaining or cerating the film. Mag Dean and

⁹ <http://www.awn.com/news/moonbot-creates-silent-short-dolby>. 20.04.2015

¹⁰ <http://www.fxguide.com/quicktakes/watch-dolbys-short-film-silent>. 20.04.2015



Oldenburg, Animation Staff of Silent, are commenting on Silent: “ We could not have time to make miniatures of characters and space of Silent due to limitation of time. But in past, we worked with miniatures on Mr. Morris Lessmore’s Fantastic Books or Chipotle. In this case, visual elements of the film should look like miniatures. It can be said that our miniature experience of Mr. Morris is applied to computer this time.”¹⁰ As Dean and Oldenburg noted, the role of computer graphics gains importance and computer becomes the reflection of real-life or objects in computer aided animations.



Image 2. Silent short animation film, sample of pre-application of 3D modelling¹¹

Deane: “Two-dimensional and three-dimensional computer environment, movement and dynamism brought to the point that we have resorted to various tricks on them, creating the perception of the viewer mobility. Moving on the surface of the shade impression is an example. We also use a hybrid of two and three-dimensional scenes. The object of such a character with Matt coating and painting work to ensure that characters really hold objects.” In the film, Autodesk

¹¹ <http://www.fxguide.com/quicktakes/watch-dolbys-short-film-silent>. 20.04.2015



Maya software with mental ray for lightning and other effects. Three-dimensional modeling is edited on two-dimensional scenes¹¹.

In general the film that uses visual and audio elements together, stimulates techniques tailored to suit the new era, leading to the initial formation stages of the cinema audience with stories and there it becomes a qualified sample of short animation film.

2.2 Technical Staff of Silent Short Animation Film

Although there are nearly hundred staff working in the animation technically, 17 animators are especially working in Animation Unit. There are 26 people are in Visual Effects Unit and 13 people in the Special Effects Unit. One of the leading modellers of film is Bilgic Akin working in Special Effects Unit. The presented numbers are important in terms of understanding of teamwork and specialization in animations.

The film's director is Limbert Fabian and co-director is Brandon Oldenburg. The art director also is Limbert Fabian. Rest of the Art Unit team is as below:

Joe Bluhm (character design / interior design / storyboard artist), Kenny Callicutt (character design / conceptual design / matte coating / storyboard artist), Christine Ellis (concept art / interior design / storyboard artist), Limbert Fabian (character design / storyboard artist), William Joyce (character design), who Kuchenberg (concept art / interior design), Brandon Oldenburg (character design / storyboard artist), Kendra Phillips (character design / storyboard artist) and Tyler Schatz (concept art / matte coating) ¹².

3. CONCLUSION

Human beings have habits as they visually record their lives and experiences. In this sense, the most primitive examples of animation is obtained in Lascaux Cave in France. People did pictures on the walls of caves hiding traces of their own lives in pre-historical ages and these pictures are known as the oldest storyboards. Which

¹² http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3583608/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ql_1, 20.04.2015



benefit from the wealth of the expressiveness of drawing expressions of different civilizations and said that they have adopted for this purpose.

As an example, in the Pagan period in Egypt, hieroglyphic writing alphabet were used as graphical or symbolic explanations and they were adopted and used for centuries. Similarly, miniatures are made depicted in Ottoman that becomes the historical definitions of Ottoman life, palace and surroundings. Intangible heritage is transferred to future generations by gathering these important drawings.

Animation, although the language of the 21st century's new drawings, the magical effect of the image, offers audiences and to future generations. In addition, animation can be reproduced as an art discipline, despite the picture is condemned to the exhibition grounds, an individual in any environment / reach the venue and art, along with a structure which offers beyond the spatial limitations. Animation also includes another attack on the unique distinction of being the art. All of these positive / negative characteristics with developing animation, and to update renews itself, is an interdisciplinary arts.

All these features of the stimulus, it serves an important element in the advertising. As an example of an ad animation Silent short film, Epica 2014 Animation Department, one of Europe's most prestigious award for the Advertising Award. The success of the film, as well as the story of the evolution of cinema, plays the role of technical features and aesthetic concerns. Film, being the product of a team of about 100 people, underlines the necessity of careful preparation of the animation. In this study, the Silent short film, have been evaluated by space and the overall quality of the animation technique. Silent on the assessment in the short film, given to the opinions of the art director and artist interviews related art director and artist are scanned.



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